

E 221

.N27

Copy 1

National academy of sciences.

Report of a committee...on the condition
and preservation of the
Declaration of Independence.

New York, 1903:-



Class E 221

Book . N 27

Report of a Committee of the National Academy of Sciences on the Condition and Preservation of the Declaration of Inde- pendence.

NEW YORK, *April 24, 1903.*

HONORABLE JOHN HAY,
Secretary of State.

DEAR SIR: In response to a communication received from you, a committee was appointed by President Agassiz of the National Academy of Sciences to confer with you with regard to the present condition of the Declaration of Independence, and to make such recommendations as should seem desirable to insure the preservation of this precious instrument. The committee was also requested to send their report to you directly in order to avoid the delay which might result from reporting in the usual manner to the officers of the Academy. The members of the committee are John S. Billings, Ira Remsen, and Charles F. Chandler.

After conferring with you, the committee was given an opportunity to make a careful examination of the instrument with the assistance of Mr. A. H. Allen, Chief of the Bureau of Rolls and Library, and with the assistance of Dr. Wilbur M. Gray of the Army Medical Museum.

The instrument has suffered very seriously from the very harsh treatment to which it was exposed in the earlier years of the Republic. Folding and rolling have creased and broken the parchment. The wet press-copying operation, to which it was exposed about 1820, for the purpose of producing a facsimile copy, removed a large portion of the ink. Subsequent exposure to the action of light for more than thirty years, while the instrument was placed on exhibition, has resulted in the fading of the ink, particularly in the signatures. The present method of caring for the instrument seems to be the best that can be suggested.

The committee is pleased to find that no evidence of mould or other disintegrating agents can be discovered upon the parchment by careful microscopic examination; nor any evidence that disintegration is now in progress.

The investigation has been facilitated by the photograph that was taken in 1883, two years after the previous examination by a committee of the Academy, and we would suggest the desirability of taking another photograph of about the same size at the present time, and from time to time in the future as an aid to future investigations.

E221

.N27

The committee does not consider it wise to apply any chemicals with a view to restoring the original color of the ink, because such application could be but partially successful, as a considerable percentage of the original ink was removed in making the copy about 1820, and also because such application might result in serious discoloration of the parchment; nor does the committee consider it necessary or advisable to apply any solution, such as collodion, paraffin, etc., with a view to strengthening the parchment or making it moisture proof.

The committee is of opinion that the present method of protecting the instrument should be continued; that it should be kept in the dark and as dry as possible, and never placed on exhibition.

CHARLES F. CHANDLER,
Chairman of the Committee.

The Secretary of State has directed that the recommendations of the committee as set forth in the foregoing report be observed.

The Department of State has no copies of the Declaration of Independence in any form for distribution.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, D. C.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 711 511 2

